



Swenson a Resource for the Livestock and Meat Industries

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MADISON – When livestock producers or meat processors are seeking answers to their questions or looking for new opportunities, they can turn to Jeff Swenson at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Swenson, the state's Livestock and Meat Specialist, assists producers and meat processors find new markets, overcome market barriers, and meet challenges in the industry.

"At DATCP, I work to connect the dots for Wisconsin's livestock producers and meat processors," said Swenson. "The highlight of this position is working with producers I have known for years and forming new relationships with meat processors I continue to meet."

Swenson grew up on his family's dairy and beef farm in Minnesota before earning his degree in agricultural journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He gained experience in and out of the agricultural industry at Wisconsin State Fair Park, Semex USA, Equity Cooperative, and Sitel before coming to DATCP.

In this position, Swenson serves with a dozen livestock and meat organizations including the Wisconsin Beef Council, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors, and the Wisconsin Pork Association to stay connected to the industry. Swenson cooperates with many partners including UW-Extension specialists, nutritionists, and veterinarians to help producers get the answers they need to get the best price available.

Producers can reach out to Swenson to make a business plan or find cost projections. He collaborates with DATCP's Farm Center to assist producers through difficult times or individuals starting a new business venture. It has been exciting to engage with producers who are beginning direct marketing.

"I have worked with producers who are looking to increase their profit margin by direct marketing to consumers through a CSA or farmers market," added Swenson. "I can bring together producers trying similar ventures to share resources, and I can offer assistance in gaining the correct licenses and permits needed for their business."

The Wisconsin Specialty Meat Initiative promotes the quality, taste, and tradition of Wisconsin meats. Swenson encourages meat processors to take advantage of the technical assistance available to meat processors through the Specialty Meat Development Center. There are also courses available to beginning and experienced meat processors.

"I am very pleased with the educational opportunities we have been able to make available to the meat processing community," said Swenson. "The *Master Meat Crafter Program* is an in-depth course for meat processors offering accreditation upon completion, and the *Preparing for a Career in the Meat Industry* workshops offered an introduction to those just getting started."

New opportunities are occurring in the meat industry all the time. After Interstate Shipment of State-Inspected Meat is in place, processors will be able to advance to new markets never open to them before out of the state borders. With an increase of state inspectors available, processors will be able to make more meat products in a day.

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Jeff Swenson is DATCP's Livestock and Meat Specialist. Swenson assists producers and meat processors find new markets, overcome barriers, and meet challenges.

The Wisconsin meat industry has a \$12.3 billion economic impact on our state and provides 88,000 jobs. Wisconsin is home to 289 state-inspected meat processing plants, more than any other state, and over 120 federally-inspected meat facilities that are all known for their craftsmanship.

Swenson sees part of his responsibility at DATCP as an advocate for animal agriculture and promoting meats as a necessary part of a healthy diet. The Specialty Meats Map is an easy-to-use tool he helped create that is available online at <http://datcpGIS.wi.gov/SpecialtyMeats/> to identify specialty meat processors in Wisconsin. Consumers can also plan to learn more about specialty meats of the state in an upcoming episode of *Discover Wisconsin*.

“This is an exciting and challenging time for producers. While there is high input costs and a tight profit margin, there are always new opportunities because of the strong infrastructure available in the state,” concluded Swenson. “Wisconsin producers and processors are dedicated to producing a safe, wholesome and nutritious meat product that consumers can trust and rely on for an affordable price.”

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